

The Observation Post

An ARRL Publication for Official Observers

Introduction. As communications manager, this is my first opportunity to communicate directly with you other than what little has been directed to OOs in QCD. First off, I think an apology is due, since this is the first bulletin directed to you, and it has been long overdue.

An excuse, if there is one, is that the priorities have been in all directions at once. To find the time to put something together, which we hope is meaningful, has so far just not been possible. I appreciate your patience, and trust you have recognized by QST and other means that your work and dedication to the cause you espouse, has been foremost in my thoughts.

Upon coming on board as communications manager, I have attempted to make myself available to the membership as much as possible. In the past few months, which have gone by so very quickly, I have had the pleasure of visiting several hamfests, conventions, and club meetings both stateside and abroad. So far I have visited 1/3 of the SCMs, and this personal communication has been most helpful to me in helping to feel the grass roots pulse about what the programs ARRL and the Communications Department should be. Some of these discussions have focused on the OO program, and is the subject of this bulletin.

In these discussions, I have emphasized the need for response to the daily violations that occur -- violations that may very well threaten the use of our bands. A crusade reminiscent of "The Old Man" series by Hiram Percy Maxim himself, who loathed the operating practices of his day, is very much in order today. At the fore of this activity I see the role of the Official Observer program.

The "Operating News" section of QST has begun to address this problem recently in such articles as "TRASH" (July 1979 QST), and "Where Have all the Control Operators Gone?" (November 1979 QST).

It is the intent of this writer to strengthen the role of the Official Observer function. I solicit your input as to how to best accomplish this goal of a more visible, viable, effective program. That is the thrust of this bulletin.

Let me say at this time that a great debt of gratitude, long overdue gratitude I'm sure, is owed to you, the many Observers who volunteer their time and effort. It is very much appreciated. I hope you will continue your good efforts, accelerate them as appropriate, and assist in recruiting more OOs to make your job easier, thereby enhancing Amateur Radio.

New Title. New titles don't necessarily do much, but it does give us a handle. The Official Observer Bulletin will henceforth be known as The Observation Post, a little play on words that will hopefully contain information of benefit to you in your OObing. It has been the goal to publish a bulletin semi-annually, a goal not always met. We expect to publish the Post in the fall, and as budget/time/news permit, a one pager from time to time to assist observers.

Make Those Reports Entirely Objective. At Headquarters we receive at least one or two phone calls a week, from irate recipients of OO notices. Thank goodness, the problem is usually self made . . . the usual don't tell me attitude . . . We can't do much about them. But occasionally, and only occasionally, we get calls from people who say the OO has written something like the following on the report:

"You should know better."

"Be sure you're not running too much power, hi."

"What's the matter with you? Don't you read the regs?"

Most OOs know this already. But the above or similar like it are definite NO-NOs. You are an Official Observer . . . one who observes, nothing more, nothing less. You are not an Official Judge. An observation should be made in a scientific, removed from the scene, matter of fact way. Observations and resulting reports must be purely objective.

Comments like the above are subjective and tend to pass judgement and reflect opinion. Not good. Keep a purely detached role. As they used to say on Dragnet, "Jest the facts, Ma'am."

Observers sometimes look to Headquarters for backing when they get embroiled in a hassle. Several have been handled by this writer to the Observers and sometimes recipients satisfaction. But don't put Hq. on tenuous ground of backing up an OO's subjective opinionated report. Simply report the facts and we will back you up to the hilt.

But Add the Personal Touch. Now that we are all programmed into being cold and detached, we're going to swing in the other direction.

Put yourself in the shoes of the recipient. Let's paint the picture of the ideal worst case. The Official Observer program is taken over by a gigantic all knowing bandscanning computer, which automatically prints out the discrepancy report. Ever try to argue with a computer who has your Master Charge balance wrong? How about the computers that print checks for \$1,000,000,000 instead of \$100? Same problem. Receipt of an OO notice can be a cold and impersonal thing. The card is a form . . . probably typed . . . and it comes across rather cold.

WALPSI, who made the top ten for the past year has a very good technique that we would do well to emulate. To give it that little personal touch, he always adds to the discrepancy report the following handwritten remark: "I hope this report will be of help to you. 73."

Sounds harmless, but it can go a long way to making the recipient feel that you do care for his problem and him and that a real person is behind the OO report. Notice that this does not detract from the objectivity of the report, but it adds the personal touch that can make a great deal of difference.

OOing on VHF. A Class III OO wrote in and wanted to know to what degree he should observe on his local repeaters. OOing here is a special problem, for the observee will very likely be known to the observer. I wrote him the following letter which may be of help to others facing the same problem.

I can understand your reluctance in sending OO notices to locals.

Any suggestions I may offer are of a practical nature. When sending out a notice to a local repeater user, you must weigh the consequences. The purpose of receipt of the report is to bring about positive results. If you have some feeling that this will not be accomplished, then you may as well not send the report. Even if you are "right" to do so. If you feel that a negative response will result and possible loss of friends, don't send it. Unless you don't mind losing friends. But each case is different.

There are perhaps many friends who will react positively and perhaps even admire your courage for speaking out on the issue. Only you can be the judge of which ones merit taking the chance.

Being tactful can also go a long way. The bare facts of the case staring the offender in the face can sometimes wave the red flag. One very successful OO always adds a personal comment by saying: "I hope this report will be of help to you. 73." This tends to remove some of the sting.

The long and short of it is, if in doubt, don't.

73,

John F. Lindholm, W1XX
Communications Manager

OOs go Classless? When the Communications Department was restructured a couple of years ago, the number of observer classes was reduced from 5(!) to 3. Being a proponent of the concept that an effective program should be as simple as possible, and the more simple, the better the chances of being effective, I ask the following question. Why not reduce it to zero, i.e., why have classes at all?

I see the following problems with the concept of classes. (1) It's un-American. (2) If I were to restrict my observing to the vhfs, that could make me a Class III OO. Why should I be designated Class III just because vhf is my haunt? Does that mean vhf is Class III, while the low bands are something "better?" Sure sounds that way. And why are Technicians third class? (3) The only difference between classes, other than the vhf segregation, is that some have qualified to make precise frequency measurements, and others have not. Because one has not so qualified does not make that individual a 2nd class citizen, or worse yet (because of a vhf preference) a third class citizen.

So it is here proposed to do away with classes altogether, and have some mechanism to allow for those who have qualified for precise frequency measurement to so indicate on their OO report cards. Which brings us to the OO reporting forms.

New OO Report Proposed. Many of the terms on the OO reporting forms are very much dated, especially the Phone Discrepancy Report, the long form CD-22. Which leads to a very interesting point.

The long form on phone operating is sent to the recipient via Headquarters, supposedly because we have to screen them to make sure you know what you are doing.

Rejected! If you are an OO and the program is a good one with the proper guidelines, then you don't need us to stand over your shoulder!

Soooooo. . . we are suggesting a single all-purpose, multi-use form CD-213 to be sent directly in all cases. A proposed copy of that form has been sent to several OOs prior to publication of this Post edition for their opinion. We have made some minor surgery as a result of that input to make it as universally acceptable as possible. The ARRL Technical Department has also been consulted regarding use of some technical discrepancy terms. Their suggestions proved most helpful in making the new reporting form, CD-213.

Please note that there is more room for remarks. Use this space to amplify the problem, especially if it is not adequately covered in one of the boxes. And most importantly, use the remarks section to make a personal comment to allow the observee to know that somebody warm out there with flesh and blood is sending the card . . . make it personal, right?

Since the OO guidelines instruction sheet, CD-100 is being revised to correlate with the new form, we need your pronto input on anything we or the OOs surveyed may have overlooked in making these revisions.

Precise Frequency Measurement Requirements. Our methods of pinpointing the present Class I OO is very haphazard. The requirement for the OO qualified for "precise frequency measurement" would remain the same as the present Class I OO, at 100 Hz. The new setup would make it incumbent upon the OO to determine he was so qualified, rather than have the SCM designate classes and attempt to keep current on whether the OO maintained his qualifications. It is proposed that such an OO would be required to qualify at least ONCE per year, rather than twice as presently required for Class I OOs. Please notice that qualification be required at least once per year, so it is up to the OO to be sure he had so qualified before indicating his ability to make such precise frequency measurements on OO reports. Unless an OO has qualified in an FMT in one of the previous four FMTs (four per year are held), then all frequencies must be designated as "approximate." The calls of those who have qualified are listed in QST in February, May, August, and December.

CD-23 Also Revised. Making your reporting to the SCM as painless as possible is another goal. Going along with the other simplification proposed, we have eliminated some parts of the form not necessary for record keeping. CD-23 alerts your SCM to your activities. He/she then submits it to Hq. for our record keeping. You should keep a record of all cards sent, and a card file system is the best way to do this. Short of that, a copy of CD-23 will also accomplish this. Please continue to send this to the SCM immediately after the first of the month. Please indicate your TOTAL number of observations made during the month, something that has been added to the revised form.

The Big OO in the Sky. Or this could be entitled who is the chief? Well, traditionally this function has rested in the hands of the communications manager. There is much to be said for this, for he does make contact on occasion with FCC officials. The CM should certainly be familiar with the program. But that can be said for any of the functions of the Communications Department, over which the CM has overall command, but not direct responsibility to administer every detail.

The OO program is one of the only field organization functions that does not come under the direct heading of a CD branch, headed up by an Assistant Communications Manager

It comes directly under the CM. Perhaps because there ain't nobody else to do it.

Well, would it be all that awful if we had a volunteer NATIONAL OO coordinator, who could function as a clearing house for OO questions, hassles, write bulletins, etc. to generally oversee the program? To be, of course, as with all other CD functions, answerable to the CM? It should be an observable fact that all good things do not come from Newington . . . some people might say that anything good does not come from Newington. (Say that again??)

Such a concept could have its problems . . . it would be easy for the Head OO to go and attempt to spend all the money of the League on this one project alone. Or potentially, such an individual could get us into a heap of trouble with Washington. But it may be worth considering. How would you as an OO feel if your problems were directed to a volunteer outside Newington? And were such a volunteer position available, who would want the job?

Part 97. One of the most often heard OO complaints heard so far at this office is that we do not help keep OOs current on latest changes in the rules and regs. We like good complaints.

Therefore, U.S. OOs should keep your eyes peeled on the mailbox in the next couple of weeks for a copy of the latest License Manual, which has Part 97 in the back. If you see mail arriving via mule team or square riggers from the open sea, you'll know that's it . . . for they are being sent via library rate.

Future editions of The Observation Post will keep you updated on changes in the regs as they occur.

A photocopy of the Canadian DOC General Radio Regulations is being sent under separate cover to all VE OOs, with updates, hopefully, as they occur.

Top Ten. Our OO calendar year for Hq. recording-keeping purposes runs from October 10 of each year. The "Top Ten" for the past 12 month period are to be congratulated for their fine efforts. They are (in order):

K6KA, W4NTO, K8NYN, WØDYK, W5QPX, W4HU, KØKP, WA1PSI, K8JH, and W9TT.

Thus the above mentioned become eligible for a subscription to the Callbook, not as a reward per se, but to assist them in the coming year of observations. Should any decline, the following "second top ten" will be given the same opportunity. Listed in order:

K7DUE, W2AET, WA7IUN, K7VNI, W1NF, W3YQ, WØSS, W8GQ, W4ZR, AAØJ.

A big "thank you" to all of the above, and the entire cast of OOs who made a total of 5560 observations in the past year.

Malicious Interference. There has been a lot of publicity recently about the activities in curbing the malicious interference on the West Coast in California. Attorney Joe Murdler, N6AHU, president of the Personal Communications Foundation, and Bob Booth, ARRL General Counsel, and others met recently with FCC Chairman Ferris to explore ways of combatting the malicious interference problem. An FCC crackdown resulted with the FBI assisting in the arrest of one individual and "show cause" letters sent to others inquiring why their licenses should not be "lifted."

I was apprised of the matter recently at the Southwestern Division Convention by Attorney Merdler, and I also was in contact with General Counsel Booth during a recent Washington trip.

It is premature at this time to envision the future role of OOs in such matters, but I mention it here in sketchy form only so that you will "keep the faith" and realize that something is indeed being done in this area of blatant infractions. Your cause as an OO is a just one and I urge you to continue, for you are not a "voice crying in the wilderness."

Further effort in this area is continuing.

73, *John, W1XX*
John F. Lindholm, W1XX
Communications Manager

OFFICIAL OBSERVER REPORT

Radio: _____, your call was heard ^{calling} working _____ at _____ UTC.

Date: _____ 198__ ^{Approx.} Measured* frequency _____ kHz. Mode _____ Your RST _____.

The following is noted in the interest of maintaining Amateur Radio's reputation for good operating/technical practices: ☐ FREQUENCY INSTABILITY ☐ HARMONIC ☐ SPURIOUS ☐ HUM
☐ KEY CLICKS ☐ BROAD SIGNAL ☐ DISTORTED AUDIO ☐ OVER DEVIATION
☐ OUT OF BAND ☐ OTHER

Remarks: _____

Please refer to FCC/DOC Regulation _____. This is NOT an official citation. A reply is NOT required. The intent of this notice is to alert you to the above noted operating condition and avoid an official FCC/DOC citation. This observer has fulfilled this helping role by simply alerting you; and is not required to reply to correspondence. This observer thanks you for your courtesy and cooperation in improving the Amateur Radio Service.

*A "measured" frequency indicates that the observer has met rigid ARRL standards for precise frequency measurement.

CD-213 (1179) Signature _____ Call _____

From(print).....

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To:

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The Official Observer program is sponsored by the American Radio Relay League, 225 Main Street, Newington, CT 06111, U.S.A., to help amateurs help each other. For over 50 years, this volunteer program has aided thousands of amateurs to maintain their transmitting equipment and operating procedures in compliance with the regulations. High standards of operation benefit the entire amateur community. Your continued cooperation is appreciated.